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THE EXCHANGE

News from FYSB and the Youth Services Field

Inside

MENTORING AS A TOOL FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

What does Deborah, a 40-something accounting professor in Missoula, Montana, have in common with John, a teenage student at North Clackamas High School in Clackamas County, Oregon?

They're both mentors. Deborah mentors Stephanie, a rather serious child whose father has been incarcerated all 7 years of her life. John mentors Ricky, a preschooler who always says "moo" when they read a book about a cow. Both relationships are thriving with the help of grants from the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), within the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS's) Administration for Children and Families (ACF). And both relationships exemplify how mentoring can be used to nurture a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and empowerment—key elements of Positive Youth Development—not just in the mentee, but in the mentor as well.

With the growing evidence of mentoring's effectiveness as a Positive Youth Development tool, mentoring programs have been gaining momentum all around the country over the past decade. FYSB has been one of the leaders in this push. In particular, two recent FYSB initiatives are setting the stage for mentoring programs to continue expanding within a culture of Positive Youth Development:

- Its Mentoring Children of Prisoners (MCP) Program, in which adults mentor children and youth
- Its collaborative initiative with Head Start, in which older youth have leadership roles in mentoring younger children

These two FYSB mentoring initiatives—even though they target different populations and draw from different volunteer pools—have a lot in common. As Rev. Alfonso Wyatt in his presentation at an MCP grantee meeting stated, "mentoring takes a lot of forms, but it works if we connect." A closer look shows the two programs have similar goals, similar approaches, similar issues, similar outcomes. This issue of *The Exchange* takes that closer look.

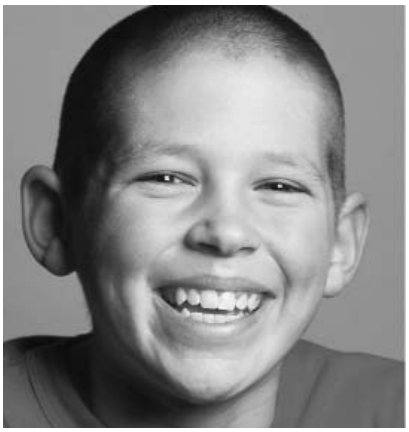
What exactly is a mentor?

Here's how Merriam-Webster defines it: men·tor: 1 capitalized : a friend of Odysseus entrusted with the education of Odysseus' son Telemachus; 2 a : a trusted counselor or guide b : **TUTOR, COACH**

The mythical Odysseus recognized what modern research continues to prove: A mentor can exert a powerful, life-changing influence on a child or youth. The latest thinking extends that classic definition of mentoring to "any adult-youth relationship that includes a combination of teaching, advising, and caring over an extended period of time" (*The Youth Development Handbook*, 2004). The John-Ricky relationship stretches that definition even more, since John is not technically an adult. Yet, as FYSB recognizes through its collaborative initiative with Head Start, even a highschooler can be a mentor: he or she can be a positive role model for a younger child, help that child academically and socially, set an example of what it means to give of oneself, and—at the same time—grow from the experience.

A mentor—just like a parent, caregiver, teacher, coach, youth worker, neighbor, or any other person in a child or youth's daily life—can broaden that young person's horizons and boost his or her self-confidence. Research also shows that a caring mentor can increase the likelihood that a young person will attend school regularly, perform well academically, and make healthy life choices rather than engage in self-destructive, risk-taking, or violent behavior. And a sustained mentoring relationship, through which a young person experiences support, guidance, and connectedness, can also help that young person improve relationships with his or her peers, caregivers, and other members of the community.

Take the story of Michael, for example…



Michael's Report Card

Michael, a fifth grader in South Philadelphia, proudly handed the report card to his grandmother: 4 A's, 2 B's, and 99 percent attendance. Could this be the same child who, less than a year earlier, had been matched with a mentor at the U.S. Dream Academy's learning center?

The same child who'd been at risk of being retained in fourth grade? Back then, Michael's academic performance had been low, his number of disciplinary incidents had been high, and his attendance had been an abysmal 70 percent. It's even harder to believe Michael's progress considering all the cards stacked against him from the moment he was born—a 3-pound baby of an incarcerated, crack-addicted mother. He's never really known his father, who's been incarcerated most of Michael's life. And his mother continues to drift in and out of prison, chemical dependency treatment facilities, and—sadly—Michael's life. But Michael also has something valuable going for him: he lives with a grandmother who doesn't want him stigmatized by his parents' behavior. She heard about the U.S. Dream Academy through her church. Within 12 weeks of being matched with a mentor, Michael made up all his unfinished homework. Within 10 months of being matched, his disciplinary incidents decreased dramatically. That's when he brought home that most impressive report card.

MENTORING WORKS

A seminal study on mentoring that included about 1,000 young people, aged 10–16, who were on the waiting list for Big Brothers Big Sisters of America in 1992–93, showed how much mentoring can help. One group was assigned mentors, and another group remained on the waiting list. Eighteen months later, the children with mentors:

- Were less likely to begin using illegal drugs and alcohol
- Were less violent (less likely to hit someone)
- Were more likely to have improved school attendance, performance, and attitudes toward completing schoolwork
- Were more likely to have improved peer and family relationships

Making a Difference, 2000

THE MCP PROGRAM: MEETING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF A HIDDEN POPULATION

When the Pima Prevention Partnership's MCP program in Tucson was forming, one of its program partners, the local Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, reviewed its existing caseload. They asked a question no one had asked before: How many children already in their program could benefit from mentoring geared specifically toward children of prisoners? To their surprise, they discovered that about 20 percent of the children had an incarcerated parent or parents. They'd been working with this population all along, and they never knew it!

According to recent statistics, approximately 2 million children and youth in the United States have at least one

parent in a Federal or State correctional facility. The impact of this incarceration can be devastating to these young people in many ways:

- The events surrounding the actual incarceration can be traumatic.
- Their living conditions—both before and after the incarceration—are usually unstable.
- They are uncertain of their future.
- They often feel shame, anger, and other troubling emotions.
- Many experience a sense of detachment.
- They are seven times more likely than other children and youth to become involved in juvenile or adult corrections themselves.

Octavia Edinburg, Executive Director of the New Orleans-based Community Service Center, Inc. (CSC), talks about the gaping hole in the lives of these children—the absence of a parent or parents. "It's not like they're away just because they're hospitalized or something," she notes. "In many cases, the parents' behavior caused the separation from their families. Many of these kids may have been with grandparents for a long time before the incarceration. A lot of them have shaky relationships with their parents. A lot of them had no relationship with their dads before the incarceration. A lot of them live with a caregiver who may also be quite angry with the actual parent." And on top of that pain, many also live with economic, social, and emotional burdens caused by their parent's incarceration.

Edinburg believes that the unique circumstances in these children's lives make mentoring particularly essential. And so does the Federal Government.

WHO ARE THE GRANTEES?

FYSB launched its MCP Program in October 2003, awarding $9 million in grants to 52 public agencies and nongovernmental organizations across the country. They awarded another $50 million for fiscal year (FY) 2004 to 169 additional grantees.

The 221 programs that received grants for FY 2004 fall into four broad categories:

- Faith-based organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Community-based or government agencies partnering with faith-based organizations
- Tribal organizations

The individuals from four of the original grantee programs who spoke to us in 2004 represent the full range of typical grantees. They are situated in diverse areas across the country. They deal with a wide range of populations. They vary in size. Some have been operating for years, while others are just getting started. Each encompasses a diverse group of local partners, as shown in the table below:

FOUR MODEL PROGRAMS, FOUR GOALS, FOUR TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

Program and Location	Goal	Partners*
U.S. Dream Academy, Inc. Columbia, MD (8 centers in 7 cities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Houston, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC)	To mentor 3,000 children of incarcerated parents, aged 7–12, over a 3-year period	The Four "C's": ◆ **Colleges and universities**, such as American University, Howard University, Johns Hopkins, and Temple College ◆ **Churches**, such as Bright Hope Church ◆ **Corporations**, such as DuPont ◆ **Community organizations**, such as Putting Forth Mentors, Points of Light Foundation, National Volunteer Service Centers Partnership, and **community campaigns or events,** such as Strive for 5 Friend and Family Campaign, January Jamboree, Building Bridges Community Outreach Campaign, and Dreamfest
Pima Prevention Partnership Tucson, AZ	To mentor 100 children of incarcerated parents by end of the first year, increasing to 334 by the third year	◆ Tucson Big Brothers Big Sisters ◆ Prison Fellowship Ministries (Angel Tree Mentoring) ◆ The KARE Family Center ◆ Arizona Governor's Office for Children
Missoula County, Office of Planning and Grants Missoula, MT	To mentor 40 children of incarcerated parents, aged 4–15	◆ Missoula County, Office of Planning and Grants ◆ Big Brothers Big Sisters of Missoula, Montana
Community Service Center, Inc. (CSC) New Orleans, LA	To mentor 25 children of incarcerated parents	◆ Sixth Baptist Church ◆ Ashe Cultural Arts Center ◆ Southern University School of Social Work ◆ Tulane University School of Social Work

**Partnerships are not necessarily contractual or funded with FYSB dollars.*

Executive and clinical staff from these four programs shared their experiences in setting up and sustaining their operations. They discussed some of the unique challenges they face. They described some of the strategies they use to meet these challenges. And they told some compelling stories about the lives of specific children, their families, and their mentors.

WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS TO SETTING UP AND SUSTAINING A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAM?

"Know what you want to accomplish: Figure out your mission, and hold true to it." DeAnn Sarah Brady, National Program Director of the U.S. Dream Academy, the largest and most established of the four highlighted MCP grantee programs, offers those words of advice to anyone trying to set up or sustain a successful mentoring program. Maggie Allen of Pima Prevention Partnership's midsized MCP program in Tucson agrees, adding, "Stay at it, just doing what you do. Focus on the end result—otherwise it can get overwhelming." Edinburg takes this advice one step further. As Executive Director of CSC, which has the smallest of the four highlighted MCP programs, she similarly urges staff to stay focused on their program's mission and goals and, even more important, to "be passionate about it. If it's just a passing phase, or if you think there's money in it, it won't work."

FOCUS. GOALS. PASSION. Those are the heart of a successful program. But what about its skeletal structure? Allen stresses the importance of collaborating with other community agencies as well as garnering support from the community. And Edinburg agrees: "Get affiliates, get good partners," she advises. "You'll have a lot of pieces to fill in as you go. There are things you don't realize when you start out, and those partners and affiliates will help fill in the gaps." Her program (CSC) is a perfect example of how each partner contributes its piece and how all the pieces fit together to form a solid framework for a well-functioning operation. Here's how it works:

A SOLID COMMUNITY BASE:

The organizational "bones" of a FYSB grantee mentoring program

PROFILE:

The Community Service Center, Inc. (CSC), New Orleans, LA

- The Sixth Baptist Church recruits mentors through its religious community.
- The Southern University School of Social Work provides mentor training.
- The Ashe Cultural Arts Center arranges support groups and group activities, such as story telling, creative writing, and expressive writing.
- Tulane University School of Social Work works with caregivers—for example, they conduct a support group for them—and they will also evaluate the program.
- CSC offers case management services for the families.

So focus, goals, and passion provide the heart. A solid community base can provide the structure. Now how does a program reach out, beyond itself, to find the fuel to keep it going? How does it find the children of prisoners who need mentoring? How does it recruit mentors?

HOW DO THE PROGRAMS FIND AND RECRUIT MENTORS?

How does the Pima Prevention Partnership's MCP program in Tucson, Arizona, recruit mentors?

They use several strategies, such as the following:

- Publish monthly news articles
- Attend career fairs
- Talk to community organizations
- Arrange workshops and luncheons

Finding the children does not seem to be a problem. There are so many of them out there, some programs already have waiting lists. Initially, some programs work through churches, community organizations, and family court systems. Some work through schools. Once those initial connections are established, "the names start to roll in," comments Loraine Bond, a match support specialist with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Missoula, Montana.

Finding and recruiting mentors, on the other hand, requires more creative and

varied strategies. Take Pima's MCP program in Tucson. Like so many programs across the country, they want to tap into the faith community. So they arranged a luncheon for 53 people, including 33 local clergymen, to get them to commit to the recruitment process. The program featured a recruitment workshop by Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., pioneer of the Amachi mentoring model—a model that partners secular and faith-based organizations to provide mentoring to children of incarcerated parents.

In addition to the faith community, potential recruitment sources could include businesses, retiree organizations, senior centers, human service agencies, civic clubs and lodges, service-oriented fraternities and sororities, and colleges and universities. But what works for one program doesn't necessarily work for another. For example, many programs avoid using college students, opting for more seasoned volunteers who are more likely to stay in the area. Not so for the MCP program in Missoula County, Montana. It's a program in a university town, so they go into university sociology classes and talk to the students. "Students make good mentors," says Bond, "assuming they pass our thorough screening process." She looks for students who are "adults with good decisionmaking skills and commitment." She particularly favors college juniors: they are more mature than younger students, and they are more likely than seniors to go beyond their 1-year basic commitment. Her program also recruits from the local law school, particularly first-year students. "Even though they're busy," says Bond, "many are looking for a 2- to 3-hour activity a week to give them a good break from their studies. They can go out and play with the kids. It's refreshing for them."

As in many mentoring programs, the program is particularly successful in recruiting female volunteers. "Girls," says Bond, "have more experience babysitting. And they know you can have a close relationship with a child without being a parent. Males tend to be less sure of what they'd do with the child. A lot of guys have never interacted with kids." That's why the program uses another recruitment strategy: they ask an already established male mentor to speak about the program. "Males respond well," says Bond, "when they see another male having fun."

The much larger U.S. Dream Academy, with its many learning centers in various cities, prefers a partner-based approach. They call it looking for "4 C's partnerships": Colleges/universities, Churches, Corporations, and Community organizations. Their volunteers tend to come in groups, and they bring with them an already established support system.

WHO MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?

Naturally, all the highlighted MCP programs do careful background checks, including fingerprinting, on potential mentors. But beyond that, program staff provide a wide-ranging wish list of what they look for when screening and selecting mentors. Their ideal mentor is someone with the following characteristics:

- Consistency in their life
- A nonjudgmental attitude
- High tolerance for organizing chaos
- Life experiences that help them relate to potential mentees
- An understanding that they're there to be an adult friend, not a buddy
- Passion
- Vision
- A caring feeling about children and family
- A fun personality
- A glass that's half full, not half empty

Bond, in Missoula, particularly favors volunteers with life experiences similar to those of their mentees. Erica and Jessica's story provides the perfect example.

Erica and Jessica: A Mentor Who Can Relate

Erica, a 20-year-old public relations major at American University, says she always knew her biological father was a "bad guy." He has been in and out of jail all her life. Erica never really knew he was incarcerated until she was older and could understand what that meant. Fortunately, she had a stepfather who filled the void. When she was 18, her biological father attempted a reunion. Although Erica was anxious to make it happen, she wasn't able to develop a meaningful relationship with him because he was still living a difficult and dangerous life. To this day, he is still in and out of prison. For more than a year, Erica has been a mentor with the U.S. Dream Academy, where she has been matched with Jessica. She and Jessica have a lot in common.

A 12-year-old student in the DC area, Jessica also has a father who has been in and out of jail her whole life. She spent the first 7 years of her life in Philadelphia, but her family left when her father exhibited violent behavior toward them.

Fortunately, like Erica, Jessica has a stepdad who has tried to fill the gap left by her absent father. Jessica is a special education student and has struggled with school for many years. She has been coming to the Dream Academy for over a year. In the past year, her mom reports that she has made tremendous academic progress. In fact, the school has promoted her from the third to the sixth grade. Her mom says that Jessica always talks about her mentor and loves to bring home the arts-and-crafts projects they do together at the Dream Academy. Jessica has not been informed directly about her father's incarceration, although she is aware that her father is not around because he has done some "bad things."

Another important quality in mentors, says Edinburg (CSC), is "fun people." "These kids have to grow up early," she says, "so they need people who can give balance." She also values the "visionary" quality in people: she looks for "someone who sees that 'this child can be a doctor, a lawyer,' someone who asks, 'what can I do to bring all those wonderful qualities out?'"

Stephanie and Deborah: A Mentor Who Is Fun

"When you first came into the program, did you have a picture in your head of what your match would be like?" "Yes," responded a serious looking 7-year-old Stephanie to her case manager at the MCP in Missoula, Montana, during their first followup meeting. "Is your match like what the picture was in your head?" Again, a very serious response—this time, "No." Stephanie paused, while the case manager took a worried breath—"I didn't think it would be this much fun."

The case manager exhaled in relief. For that one moment, she had remembered the concerns voiced by Deborah, Stephanie's Big Sister. An accounting professor in her early forties, Deborah fretted that she might be too old to mentor Stephanie, whose father had been incarcerated since she was a baby. "Maybe a 7 year old would prefer someone 21," she speculated. But as the mother of two sons, who wanted some "girl energy," she decided to give it a try anyhow. And in the end, it wasn't her age, but rather her fun-loving attitude that made a difference in Stephanie's life.

Finally, Brady (U.S. Dream Academy) stresses that there is no one kind of mentor. "They might be someone who never had siblings and always wanted one. Or they might be someone with nine brothers and sisters."

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN MAKING A SUCCESSFUL MATCH?

Making a perfect mentor-mentee match is never an easy task. It is particularly challenging given the special circumstances in the lives of prisoners' children. Many volunteers, normally eager to help, are reluctant to take on special cases. For example, these children are more transient than other populations. Bond points out that she can't guarantee to a potential mentor that the child will be in place for more than 3 or 4 months, let alone a full year. If the incarcerated parent gets transferred—as is often the case—the child might very well end up moving to be closer to the new prison.

Another challenge to matching potential mentors is the transitional nature of these children's day-to-day living situations. According to Brady, many children don't have a real home. They tend to move from relative to relative. Simply finding them often takes extra time and effort.

Some programs have children with particularly serious problems. For example, many children at the Missoula program have mothers who used methamphetamine while pregnant. As a result, these children often have severe behavioral problems, extremely short attention spans, and they are often in classes for students with special needs.

Despite these challenges, our four highlighted MCP grantee programs—along with so many others—make successful matches all the time. Why? Because they know what to look for.

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL MATCH?

What are the key things to consider during the matching process? "The personality piece," declares Allen (Pima). She believes in spending considerable time with each party individually to ensure the two are compatible. Edinburg (CSC) also looks for compatible personalities. She does so by setting up social group events, such as a holiday party, where she can observe how potential mentors interact with kids who need matches.

The U.S. Dream Academy takes the "personality piece" a step further. Not only do they listen to the individuals and observe potential matches in group settings, they also use a barrage of quantitative tools, such as Dr. Robert Rohm's DISC Classic Profile learning instrument, to classify and match up personality traits. "We get as much information as we can to make the best match we can," states Brady.

"Look at their activity levels," advises Missoula's Bond. "You can put two people together who may look fine personality-wise, but they also need to enjoy the same level of activity." For example, because the program is located in "outdoorsy" Montana, she always asks potential mentors and mentees whether they are indoor or outdoor people. "I would never," she explains, "match a skier or hiker with a kid who likes to watch video games."

Bond also looks for compatible interests. One of her most successful matches involves a mentor whose favorite activity is getting together with her mentee to cook dinner, bake brownies, and color. "Sometimes they even do each other's hair. They're a great match!"

Brady offers another piece of advice: "Look at their goals. Find out what they want out of the match." And she's not only talking about the mentor's goals and the child's goals. She also stresses the importance of determining the goals of the parents and any caregivers.

TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL MATCH, A MATCH COORDINATOR LOOKS FOR THE FOLLOWING ...

- Compatible personality traits
- Common goals
- Similar interests
- Compatible activity levels
- Commitment by both parties

... and a match coordinator must have the following:

- Patience
- Flexibility
- Insight into people
- Listening and observation skills

WHAT SUSTAINS A MENTORING MATCH?

"Lots of case management," according to Pima's Allen, who believes in calling the children, the mentors, and the family as often as two or three times a week early in the match "just to keep things going." Bond of Missoula agrees. She believes that constant monitoring, communication, and support—in the form of aggressive case management—is the key to sustaining a program. "We can get the kids. We can get the volunteers. We can make the match. But afterwards, we have to make sure the case manager knows what's going on in the match." By regularly talking to all people involved in a match, a case manager can find out what's working, what's NOT working, what's the most fun, and what's going on in their lives – thereby heading off any problems.

Bond gives some examples. During one of her regular calls, she might learn that a boy is about to visit his father in prison. So she encourages the mentor to lend an extra degree of support to the child, to the parent, and to the caregiver. She gives another example of how important it is to "know what's going on": One child told her that his mentor "wasn't in a good mood" during one of their visits. When she called the mentor, she learned that he had broken up with his girlfriend. She then helped him understand that a child needs to know that the mentor has things going on in his or her own life, that the mentor also has to struggle and deal with conflicts on a day-to-day basis.

Bond adds that the FYSB grant allows her to have plenty of contact with the families, children, and mentors with whom she works. She finds it gratifying to have adequate resources to ensure she can spend the time required to "help these matches stay afloat."

During her ongoing communication, support, and training, Bond also helps mentors develop and reinforce their

skills. For example, she advises them that "You have to be able to talk to a child. Then wait as long as it takes for the child to give you the answers you want to hear. People [mentors] want these kids to tell them everything, but these kids have learned to keep these things bottled up. They need time to relax enough to talk about personal stuff."

These examples substantiate what researchers have been telling us about the three mainstays of successful programs: careful screening, orientation and training, and strong support and supervision of mentors.

WHAT SKILLS CAN PROGRAMS HELP MENTORS DEVELOP?

With training and support from the program, a mentor is more likely to do the following:

- Ensure consistent contact over time
- Develop a close connection or an emotional bond
- Use good communication skills
- Be patient
- Engage in fun social activities
- Offer appropriate challenges or push the youth's development in some way
- Provide an environment that promotes Positive Youth Development

WHO ELSE—BESIDES THE PROGRAM, MENTOR, AND MENTEE—CAN ENHANCE A HIGH-QUALITY MENTORING RELATIONSHIP?

It's not just the program. It's not just the mentor. For a child to get the maximum benefit from a mentoring relationship, everyone has to "buy in." That includes the incarcerated parent, and it includes the caregiver. And there's a side benefit to those parties: the more they invest in encouraging the mentoring relationship, the more they get out of it themselves. Take the case of Elsa's children …

Elsa's Children: Everyone Contributes, Everyone Benefits

Elsa had been out of prison for 3 months when, during an interview with a case manager, she thanked the Pima Prevention Partnership's mentoring program. She was grateful that her three children had been matched with three mentors while she was incarcerated. And she was grateful that they would continue their relationships even though she was "out." Those mentors, she felt, were helping her stabilize her parenting. She recognized that she was "not the best parent in the world." And she recognized that the mentors were helping her children through yet another tough adjustment—her own return into their lives.

Elsa's three children—Sarah (age 14), Seth (age 10), and Bonnie (age 7)—had gone through a major transition several months earlier, when their mother was incarcerated and they went to live with Grandma. Grandma tried her best, but she didn't have enough energy to help with all the school activities and sports. She also had to deal with many financial issues. Before long, the children began having a rough time in school. Grandma recognized that even though the children had a good home and a loving caregiver, and even though they did have contact with Elsa while she was incarcerated, each child still needed an adult with whom to do activities.

Grandma had heard about Pima's MCP program through her church, so she called. A case manager sat down with her and the three children, talked with them, and listened to what each wanted from a mentoring partnership. The program then looked for mentors whose interests and backgrounds were similar to theirs. They looked for people interested in working with children at those specific ages. They looked for people whose temperaments were compatible with the children's temperaments. And they looked for mentors who wouldn't alienate any member of the family, people who would respect the family's current living situation. After each child was matched with a mentor, the pairs started incorporating informal one-to-one activities into their regular schedules. Sometimes they would simply "hang out" at the mall. Sometimes they would go somewhere new and exciting, like a play or musical at the University of Arizona campus. Also, whenever a pair felt so inclined, they took part in group activities organized by the program: once they attended a bowling party, and once they all went up into the mountains to play in the snow. Sometimes, at Grandma's request, the case manager would coordinate simultaneous activities for all three pairs so that Grandma could

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SUSTAINING MENTORING MATCHES: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Rate your mentoring program. Does your program do the following?

PREPARE MENTORS AND MENTEES:

- ❑ Define clear ground rules
- ❑ Set a positive tone from the start
- ❑ Explain the program's mission and goals to mentors
- ❑ Train, support, and supervise mentors
- ❑ Identify what mentors and mentees have in common

SUPPORT MENTOR-MENTEE MATCHES:

- ❑ Encourage mentors and mentees to see themselves as equal partners
- ❑ Facilitate ongoing communication among mentors, mentees, families, and caregivers
- ❑ Consider and respect the parents and caregivers
- ❑ Intervene and mediate if problems arise

BUILD MENTOR-MENTEE "COMMUNITIES":

- ❑ Host group activities for mentors/mentees
- ❑ Connect with community groups for activities
- ❑ Give mentors opportunities to get to know one another
- ❑ Make mentors feel they are part of a team

RECOGNIZE SUCCESS:

- ❑ Help mentors see the value of their work
- ❑ Recognize mentor-mentee matches that work
- ❑ Tell mentors and mentees how they're doing, highlighting positive accomplishments
- ❑ Get participants excited about milestones and anniversaries

Congratulations if you answered YES to most of these components of a successful mentoring program!

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have an afternoon all to herself. And so the mentoring continued, even after Elsa's release. A noticeable turnaround was evident in their situation about 6 or 7 months after the initial matches. And the family is expected to stay in the program for years to come.

In the case of Elsa's three children, Pima's MCP program attributes the positive results to three factors. First, the caregiver—in this case, Grandma—wanted the relationships to succeed, actively encouraging the children to spend time with their mentors. Second, the mother, Elsa, remained supportive of the relationships, even after her release. The program also gives itself some of the credit: by arranging activities not normally available to the children, like the performing arts excursions, they helped broaden the children's horizons.

WHAT IS POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

When the Pima Prevention Partnership's MCP program arranged for Elsa's children and their mentors to attend cultural arts events at the University of Arizona, as described in the previous case history, they added a new element to the growing bond between each pair: by exposing the children to an environment in which the children could envision their lives developing in a positive direction, they were incorporating the strategy of Positive Youth Development. But Positive Youth Development is more than just an occasional interesting excursion. It's an attitude. It's a focus that permeates every activity, every discussion, every interaction.

The Positive Youth Development approach, endorsed by FYSB, builds on young people's strengths and places importance on their feelings of hope for their futures. The approach recognizes four main ingredients as necessary for youth to develop in a positive way:

- A sense of belonging
- A sense of usefulness
- A sense of competence
- A sense of power

HOW DO PROGRAMS INCORPORATE POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES?

Mentoring creates a sense of belonging.

According to Edinburg, fostering belonging means "showing kids that if you reach out, there are people who reach back. If you give them a safe place where they can be heard, they can learn to deal with whatever life throws them. If you give them the chance to have kinder interactions with people, they develop a softer heart. When they see how people give of themselves, expecting nothing in return, they realize you [they] can just be better people."

What's more, as young people go through this process, they provide support for peers entering the program. "They show other kids that it's okay to be angry, but life is not all anger."

Mentoring creates a sense of usefulness.

To encourage a sense of usefulness the U.S. Dream Academy adds a community service component to their mentoring program. Together, children and their mentors at the program's various sites engage in a range of projects. In Houston, for example, they helped beautify the center that houses their program, even planting bushes around it. The Philadelphia mentees learned about meal planning by working with a church shelter: not only did they develop a meal plan, they also made placemats and served the food. A coat drive in Baltimore reinforced the children's sense of usefulness, as well as competence and of belonging to the larger community.

Mentoring creates a sense of competence.

For Bond at the Missoula County MCP program, kids come in with their own type of competence. "These kids have incredible survival skills," she

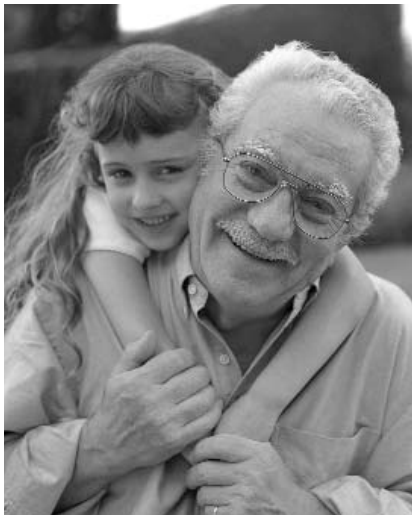
THE U.S. DREAM ACADEMY'S THREE AFTERSCHOOL CURRICULA: REINFORCING THE PYD MESSAGE OF THEIR FYSB-FUNDED SERVICES

- "**Healthy Life Choices"** works toward three goals: encouraging healthy nutrition, increasing TV-free activity levels, and resisting negative peer pressure. It teaches children how the choices they make now will affect their futures.
- **"Education and Human Values"** focuses on five fundamentals of human values: peace, truth, love, right conduct, and nonviolence. Children listen and read stories. They engage in role playing and guided imagery. They learn different chants and cheers with positive messages, which they repeat to replace negative expressions of speech.
- **"Character Building"** teaches younger children about "being your best" and asks older children to examine "what do you stand for?" Each month, all activities tie in to the "character trait of the month." Parents, caregivers, and schools are also told about the monthly character trait. That way, wherever the children look, they get positive reinforcement of the trait.

explains. Her program builds on those survival and other developmental assets to help kids become successful in life. "Street smarts," she adds, "are very valuable."

Mentoring creates a sense of power.

The CSC's MCP program turns to storytelling and writing to give children a sense of power. In a group setting, the kids participate in creative activities to express their feelings about their lives and experiences. Writing about subjects that seem out of their control, such as being in a new home or being with relatives who didn't expect them, makes them feel more in control and empowered.



WHO BENEFITS FROM MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS?

It's a win-win situation all around. The children, obviously, are the primary beneficiaries of mentoring. But a successful match can also benefit the other parties involved. Take the case of Lottie, the caregiver:

Aunt Lottie the Caregiver

Lottie has been in and out of sickle cell crises for years. But she's feeling a lot better now—at least emotionally—because three of the five nieces and nephews in her care have been matched with mentors at CSC's MCP program. It's a comfort to her, knowing there is someone for them to talk to when she's too sick or stressed.

Her five lively wards—aged 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15—have a mother who is incarcerated, and not for the first time. They were living with Aunt Lottie for 3 years —after living with their stepfather and then a great grandmother—when Lottie made that crisis call to the program. It wasn't just her health, she said. "It's too much. They're teens now. They need someone in their lives. Someone who can give them balance, help them see something besides sickness." The first thing CSC did was enlist the help of a local organization to help the family at Christmastime. Then they started the process of matching them with mentors. So far they have made three successful matches.

Once all five children get matched with mentors, Lottie will have peace of mind and a respite to take care of her own health. The children will get to interact with people whose ages, interests, and activity levels are closer to their own. Their incarcerated mother will feel less worried about her children's well-being. And five mentors will have the satisfaction of knowing they're making a real difference in the lives of an entire family.

That double-win concept of mentor and mentee is at the core of FYSB's other mentoring initiative, which pairs youth mentors with young children: The Head Start Youth Initiative.

FYSB'S HEAD START YOUTH INITIATIVE

"My partner's name is Ricky. He's really fun and hilarious and likes to do just about everything. When we read a book about a cow, he always says 'moo.' When I'm with him he smiles and plays, and I feel like he's my little brother and like I'm his role model. On a scale of 1 to 10, a 10 is how much I like going to Head Start to see my little buddy Ricky."

–John, Youth Mentor at the Oregon City Head Start Center

In 2002, the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) collaborated with the Head Start Bureau of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Department of Heath and Human Services (HHS) to establish the Head Start Youth Initiative. While many mentoring programs focus on adults mentoring youth, this initiative provides grants to programs throughout the country to engage youth as literacy mentors to young children. The initiative serves the purposes and goals of both the Head Start Bureau—to focus on age-appropriate developmental activities for 3–5-year-olds—and FYSB—to provide positive alternatives for youth, ensure their safety, and maximize their potential to take advantage of available opportunities.

In FY 2004/5, the Head Start Bureau awarded $8,000,000 in Head Start Youth Initiative grants. These grants, at a maximum of $50,000 each, were awarded to 196 Head Start programs for a 12-month period.

The Head Start Youth Initiative requested proposals designed to "improve services to Head Start children and families through the funding of projects that will promise youth participation in local Head Start programs" (Head Start Youth Mentoring Initiative program announcement). Proposed Head Start Youth Initiative programs were required to demonstrate that they established or enhanced partnerships between Head Start programs, community- or faith-based organizations, and local middle and/or high schools. Head Start programs from all Federal regions, including the Migrant Programs Branch and American Indian Branch, responded with application proposals to meaningfully integrate youth into their programs.

The Head Start Youth Initiative introduces the Positive Youth Development approach into Head Start programs as youth participate as positive role models and mentors in children and family literacy activities, attend family night events and home visits, and design and implement new classroom projects.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS INITIATIVE?

The Head Start Youth Initiative not only provides services to the young children in Head Start classes and programs and their youth mentors, it also benefits the families and communities in which Head Start operates.

Head Start Children: The initiative provides Head Start children with meaningful relationships with youth role models. Youth mentors bring additional energy and resources to the Head Start environment. The extra time and attention help Head Start children develop important language skills, enhance gross motor skills, and promote social development, all of which promote school readiness.

Youth Mentors: The initiative provides an opportunity for youth to invest in their communities. They affirm their worth by serving as role models to young children. They learn on-the-job responsibility and, through activities with the children, participate in healthy lifestyles. They become familiar with career and job opportunities in Head Start programs and the field of child development. They also get to explore their creative expression.

Head Start Programs: The initiative provides Head Start programs with additional "staff" to work individually with children in the classrooms, attend Head Start family and community events, and sometimes translate for many non-English-speaking Head Start children and parents.

Communities: The initiative helps develop and expand partnerships among Head Start programs, youth organizations and agencies, school administrators, teachers, and school counselors. It also helps establish agreements with local colleges for tuition credits for youth mentors.

WHAT ARE THE INITIATIVE'S RESULTS?

The various Head Start programs designed a range of youth involvement activities including one-on-one reading and story writing, family literacy outreach, bookmobiles, library visits, curriculum preparation, and child development training.

As a result of the programs, youth became civically engaged, often grew more interested in their other schoolwork, and realized they had a lot to contribute to others and were valued members of the Head Start teams. Perhaps most importantly, they felt the unconditional affection and delight of the Head Start children.

SPOTLIGHT ON HEAD START YOUTH INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIPS: A MODEL PROGRAM

This successful FYSB/Head Start collaboration, which began in January 2003, involved high school students from North Clackamas High School and preschoolers participating in the Jennings Lodge Head Start program located in Clackamas County, Oregon. More than 100 highschoolers attending early childhood development classes volunteered to visit 80 preschoolers at the Head Start center twice a week to spend up to 1½ hours as literacy mentors. (Their action plan is described in the shaded box on page 14).

The outcomes of the Head Start Youth Initiative in Clackamas County, as well as other funded partnerships, prove its success:

- High school students received valuable hands-on exposure to early childhood education environments and child development with the support of a structured format.

  "It really gave me an opportunity to understand what we've been discussing in our early childhood development class."

  —Monica, Youth Mentor

  "It's much better to work with kids in order to learn about them than just to read about them in a textbook."

  —Matt, Youth Mentor

- The mentoring experience improved literacy not only among the Head Start children, but also among the youth volunteers.

  "I learned as much from the preschoolers as they learned from me. This even helped me practice my Spanish!"

  —Abby, Youth Mentor

- Youth felt a sense of having done something well and having control over their futures.

  "This experience makes me really think I'd like to be a teacher."

  —Kevin, Youth Mentor

- Youth became engaged civically. Several students went on to become regular Head Start volunteers.
- Youth felt a great sense of connection to the Head Start children, and the preschoolers bonded quickly with the students. This connection helped establish a sense of belonging and a feeling of "making a difference" among the highschoolers.

  "The highschoolers wore bright red T-shirts with the motto 'Give reading a hand' printed on the fronts. On days

when the highschoolers were to arrive at the Head Start center, the delighted preschoolers would ask excitedly, 'Is this the day that the 'red shirts' are coming?'"

—Linda Dorzweiler, Codirector of the Head Start Youth Initiative at the Clackamas County Head Start

With determined partners, this project can be easily replicated. It provides win–win outcomes for all involved—student mentors, preschoolers and their families, the organizations involved, and the community at large—through incorporating components of the Positive Youth Development approach.

"My little buddy, Maria, is great fun. She speaks only Spanish and no English. The first time I saw all the kids, I knew she was the one for me....She loves painting. She remembers my name now, and she always has plans for activities to do when we come. I thought I'd be teaching her, but really it's she who teaches me. When I arrive, she always looks for me and runs over to me with a hug and smile. I wish I could spend even more time with her and hope we can return to Head Start [next year]."

—Hannah, Youth Mentor at the Oregon City Head Start Center

SPOTLIGHT ON HEAD START YOUTH INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIPS: A MODEL PROGRAM

Key components to a successful program	Key components in action: North Clackamas High School and Jennings Lodge Head Start partnership
Establish open and continuing communication between the project leaders (high school teachers and Head Start coordinators).	The ability of the staff to work together was crucial. Communication between project coordinators was ongoing, with formal and informal meetings and discussions.
Prepare and train the student mentors.	Before starting their volunteer activities, the highschoolers prepared for their roles as literacy mentors or "reading buddies." They studied reading techniques and theories, practiced interacting with children, and used role modeling techniques with partners. Before mentoring started, the Head Start kids took a field trip to the high school site where mentors set up a mock classroom complete with appropriate interest centers that incorporated art, large motor skill activities, and drama.
Incorporate a variety of learning activities during mentoring sessions.	While visiting the Head Start center, the highschoolers alternately interacted with the preschoolers and observed their peers interacting with the preschoolers. Mentoring activities included various language skill-building activities, such as reading books to the children, playing telephone games, leading children in art projects and puppetry based on the readings, and escorting the preschoolers on field trips. The Head Start center was equipped with interest centers such as puppets, blocks, table activities, a science table, and a mock grocery store.
Provide ongoing support to the mentors.	Students followed up the biweekly visits by discussing challenges and observations and recording written journal entries of their experience, for which they received high school credit. High school teachers also integrated their students' Head Start interactions with classroom-based assignments related to child development.
Be sure that mentors and preschoolers interact on a regular and consistent basis.	The highschoolers visited the Head Start preschoolers twice per week for 45 minutes to 1 hour (plus ½ hour travel time) for 8 months.
Have fun!	No problem!

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In addition to discussions with grantee program staff, we referred to the following sources in developing this issue of *The Exchange*:

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Locked Up Families: Desperately Seeking Liberation (presentation at "Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program Grantee Meeting" on April 29, 2004). Presenter: A.Wyatt.

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Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program: Responding to the 2004 Program Announcement (presentation at "Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program Grantee Meeting" on November 19, 2003). Author: S. Spagnuolo.

An Overview of Statistics (fact sheet). Author: Child Welfare League of America, Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners. No date. Available from 440 First Street, NW, Third Floor, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 638-2952; www.cwla.org/programs/incarcerated/cop_factsheet.htm.

Promoting High-Quality Mentoring Relationships (presentation at "Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program Grantee Meeting" on November 19, 2003). Authors: J. Rhodes and R. Spencer.

Recruiting Mentors: A Guide To Finding Volunteers To Work With Youth (technical assistance packet number 3). Author: L. Jucovy. 2001. Available from the National Mentoring Center, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 SW Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204; (800) 547-6339 x-135; www.nwrel.org/mentoring.

Stand By Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth. Author: J. Rhodes. 2002. Available from Harvard University Press, 79 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138; (800) 405-1619; www.hup.harvard.edu/contact.html.

The Youth Development Handbook: Coming of Age in American Communities. Editors: S. Hamilton and M. Hamilton. 2004. Available from SAGE Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; (800) 818-7243; www.sagepub.com.

CHECK OUT THESE MENTORING RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

Family and Youth Services Bureau	www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb
National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth	www.ncfy.com
Mid-Atlantic Network of Youth & Family Services (MANY)	www.manynet.org
Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners	www.cwla.org/programs/incarcerated
Friends for Youth: Mentoring Institute and Mentoring Services	www.homestead.com/prosites-ffy/aboutus.html
Public/Private Ventures and information about the Amachi model	www.ppv.org
National Mentoring Center	www.nwrel.org/mentoring
National Mentoring Partnership	www.mentoring.org
Child Trends	www.childtrends.org
National Service Resource Center	www.etr.org/nsrc/library.html
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America	www.bbbsa.org
Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents	www.e-ccip.org
STARS Mentoring Project	www.thepartnership.us/STARS
U.S. Dream Academy, Inc.	www.usdreamacademy.org

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What's Inside

LOOK INSIDE!

- Do you want to know how mentoring works?
- Want to find out who the FYSB Mentoring Children of Prisoners (MCP) grantees are and what makes them so successful?
- Looking for some best practice basics and specific examples of programs that are giving young people hope?

THE EXCHANGE

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